Heritage Language Maintenance, Language Choice and Reconstruction of Identity: The Case of Chinese Immigrants in Okinawa

母語継承及び言語選択・アイデンティティの再構築 －沖縄在住華人・華僑を中心とした事例研究－

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要旨

近年、国際舞台での中国の活躍と影響力が増している中、世界各国の中国語に対する関心度も高くなってきている。外国人向けの中国語教育だけではなく、海外在住の華人・華僑及び彼らの子孫を対象とする継承語としての中国語（Chinese as a Heritage Language, CHL）の教育も注目されている。しかし、華人・華僑のCHLへの認識やCHLの使用及び維持に関わる課題などに関する研究は極めて少ない。本論文の目的は、日本在住の中国系移民の継承語に対する意識や考えを調査し、彼らの言語生活とアイデンティティの構築について考察することである。今回の調査で沖縄在住の中国系移民家族計20世帯から収集したデータを分析した結果、中国系移民の間にCHLに対する共通認識がないため、継承語の使用と維持に関わる様々な問題が生じていることが分かった。北京語（いわば標準語）は国内外の華人・華僑社会の共通語であることについては、調査協力者全員は認めるが、しかしそれが彼ら自身の継承語という認識は必ずしも全員が持っているとは限らない。彼らにとって、CHLとは標準化された単一の言語ではなく、互いに通じ合わない方言の集合体を意味する。しかも、それぞれの方言は話者の民族的・文化的アイデンティティと深く関係している。また、親世代の移民たちの継承語に対する意識や考えは、社会的・政治的な環境にも彼らの自己アイデンティティにも影響される。今回の調査に協力してくれた親世代の移民たちの過半数は、継承語維持への関心が薄く、子供の母語継承のために費やす時間も労力も少ない。その結果、移民家族で日本語が家庭言語として使用されることが多い。さらに、アイデンティティ再構築の先決条件として、自らの民族的・言語的伝承を継承しないことが一部の親の中に見られる。沖縄在住の中国系移民家庭における言語シフト及び言語消失について、Giles & Johnson（1987）が提唱する「民族言語的アイデンティティ理論」を用いて考察してみる。

Abstract

Given the increasing influences of China on the world stage and the global interest in the Chinese language, attention is given to the importance of teaching Chinese not only as a foreign language to speakers of other languages, but also as a heritage language（HL）among overseas Chinese and their children（e.g. McGinnis, 2005; Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Wong & Xiao, 2010）. Little research, however, has been directed at understanding how Chinese as a heritage language（CHL）is conceptualized by overseas Chinese and what challenges they face in using and maintaining it. This study explored Chinese immigrants' perceptions of and attitudes toward HL use and maintenance and the role of language choice in the reconstruction of one's identity. Analysis of the ethnographic data gathered from twenty Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa suggests that HL use and maintenance among the Chinese is complicated by the fact that there was no consensus among them as to what constitutes CHL. While all the parents in this study acknowledged the fact that Mandarin

Chinese, or what is commonly known among the Chinese as *guoyu*（國語）or *putonghua*（普通話）, is the lingua franca for wider communication with other Chinese speakers, not all of them would consider it to be their HL. CHL, as it was understood by the parents, involves not a single standardized form of the Chinese language but mutually unintelligible varieties that belong to different dialect groups, each of which is tied strongly to the speakers' ethnic and cultural identification. In addition, the parents' attitudes toward HL use and maintenance were deeply influenced by their self-perceived identities as well as the sociopolitical milieu. Most of the parents were not keen to maintain use of their native language within the family and extend time and effort in their children's HL learning. As a result, Japanese became the dominant home language in all families. Furthermore, the study showed that for some immigrants, dissociation from one's ethnic and linguistic heritage served as a precondition for new identities to be reconstructed. The "ethnolinguistic identity theory"（Giles & Johnson, 1987）provides a useful framework for understanding this tendency of language shift and language loss among the Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa.

1．Introduction

Historically, Chinese emigration to Japan is believed to date back to the early 19th century with the first arrivals occurring before 1853（Vasishth, 1997）. Until a law（Imperial Ordinance No.352）was enacted in July 1899, the Chinese as well as other foreigners in Japan were not allowed to reside among the local people. As a consequence, they often congregated in the same areas according to their places of origin and relied heavily on their Chinese social networks to survive in the host country.

In 2010, according to Japanese governmental statistics, a total of 687,156 Chinese nationals（China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau all included）were registered as foreign residents in Japan（Ministry of Justice, 2011）. They accounted for 32.2% of the foreign resident population in the same year, surpassing the Koreans by 5.7% to become the largest minority group in Japan. These statistics, however, do not take into account the ethnic Chinese who have become Japanese citizens by naturalization, their Japanese-born children and grandchildren, those who migrated from colonial Taiwan（1895-1945）as Japanese citizens, let alone illegal workers who overstayed their visas. The author estimates that if all are included, the number of ethnic Chinese in Japan will probably be over one million. Unlike the early immigrants from China, newcomers are more independent and less likely to reside in one place all their lives. They are scattered across the country and are not easily distinguishable from the local people by their physical appearance. Additionally, many of them have adopted Japanese names regardless of their nationality. This paper attempts to explore various language issues of the new Chinese immigrants in Okinawa, Japan, focusing particularly on issues related to native language use and

maintenance, language choice in the home domain, and identity reconstruction.

2. Literature Review

Previous research on Chinese immigrant families in Japan has focused on the changing lifestyles and identity issues of the old Chinese communities in places such as Yokohama and Kobe, both of which have a long history of Chinese emigration and a relatively large Chinese population. Discussions on language issues have been scarce and based mostly on anecdotal evidence. The early Chinese immigrants and their children are typically depicted as highly assimilated into the local community in terms of lifestyle and language usage (e.g. Tai, 1980; Yamada, 1983; Guo, 1999; Shou, 2007), whereas new immigrants and their children are often portrayed as polyglots with a global perspective and fluid identities (e.g. Dreistadt, 1999; Noiri, 2004).

In a book-length study of the Chinese immigrant families in Kobe, Guo (1999) described the changing lifestyles of different generations. The study showed a language shift from Chinese to Japanese over five generations:

Generation	Language(s) used
1st - 2nd (aged over 70)	Chinese dialect only
2nd - 3rd (aged 45-60)	Chinese dialect plus Mandarin and Japanese
3rd - 5th (aged 20-45)	Japanese only

The same author presented the results of a questionnaire survey of the ethnic Chinese residents in Kobe (n=257) in an earlier study (Guo, 1993). It was reported that 30.5% of the respondents were able to converse freely in Chinese with Chinese native speakers, 48.4% had difficulty in comprehending Chinese speech, 19.1% spoke little Chinese, and 2% did not speak or understand Chinese at all. The study is, however, not without its limitations and problems. First, the main purpose of the study was to investigate the changing lifestyles of the Chinese immigrants as a minority community in Japan, with a focus on identity issues rather than language-related ones. Out of the 97 questions in the survey, only one question was related to language. Second, the author's claims concerning the respondents' Chinese language ability were based solely on self-reported data, which were not substantiated with evidence from other sources such as ethnographic observations or interviews. Third, the data sample was skewed in that 97% of the respondents were alumni of the *Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkou*, one of the five Chinese ethnic schools in Japan[1], where Mandarin Chinese was used as the medium of instruction. Fourth, some of the findings were over-interpreted. For example, the author claimed that 78.9% of the respondents were able to speak Chinese "freely" or "almost freely" and that

the high percentage demonstrated an outstanding level of "mother language" education of the Chinese school. The problem with this finding, however, is that the "high" percentage is in fact the sum of the percentages of those who reported that they were able to talk freely with Chinese native speakers in Chinese（30.5%）and those who expressed difficulty in understanding Chinese speech（48.4%）. Evidently, it was an over-interpretation of the statement "having difficulty in comprehending Chinese speech" to mean "being able to speak Chinese *almost freely*"（my italics）. Leaving out those who expressed difficulty in understanding Chinese speech, the results reveal that less than one-third of the graduates from the Chinese ethnic school were capable of carrying a conversation in Chinese with native speakers. Finally, the questionnaire was written in Japanese and the term *chuugokugo*（中国語, "Chinese language"）was not defined. As indicated in the study, 29.9% of the respondents were originally from Guangdong Province, 14.8% from Fujian Province, and 22.6% from the Jiangsu-Zhejiang-Shanghai region. In other words, nearly 70% of the respondents were from non-Mandarin-speaking provinces. What that means is that, instead of Mandarin, the respondents and their parents were likely to speak Yue, Min, or Wu[2] as their native language. Given the fact that the respondents came from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, we have a reason to believe that they might not all share the same notion of *chuugokugo*. As will be discussed in this paper, this is a significant issue that must not be overlooked in language maintenance research.

3. Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

According to the Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China, overseas Chinese are classified into two categories on the basis of their nationality: *huaqiao*（華僑, or *kakyou* in Japanese）and *huaren*（華人, or *kajin* in Japanese）. *Huaqiao* refers to those who have settled overseas but retain their Chinese nationality（Mainland Chinese or Taiwan）, whereas *huaren* are those who have become naturalized citizens in their country of residence and thus are no longer Chinese nationals[3]. Nevertheless, the distinction is blurred in practice as the term *huaqiao* is often used by lay people to refer to anyone who has settled in a foreign country, regardless of his or her nationality. This popular usage does not exclude those who have dual citizenship.

Depending on when they migrated, the Chinese in Japan are divided into two categories: *laohuaqiao*（老華僑 'old overseas Chinese,' *roukakyou* in Japanese）and *xinhuaqiao*（新華僑 'new overseas Chinese,' *shinkakyou* in Japanese）. The former refers to the Chinese immigrants who arrived in Japan before diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in 1972, particularly those who arrived in Japan before World War II, whereas the latter refers to the newcomers who came after 1972. This distinction is often applied to immigrants from Mainland China but not to those who migrated from Taiwan as many of them arrived during

the Japanese colonial period（1895-1945）.

Whether old or new, the Chinese in Japan and elsewhere have never been a homogenous community. Although Chinese associations, generally known as *kakyousoukai*（華僑総会）in Japan, do exist in many parts of the country, they were founded under different names by and for different groups of people. While most of them have the policy of limiting their membership to ethnic Chinese only, particularly those who hold a passport issued by the government of People's Republic of China（PRC）or Republic of China（ROC）, some would welcome any ethnic Chinese or even Japanese to become a member[4]. Despite these differences, Chinese associations are often mistakenly perceived by outsiders as all the same, just as overseas Chinese are usually regarded as members of a single, homogeneous minority community. As non-governmental, non-profit organizations, the *kakyousoukai* receive practically no financial support or political intervention from the Japanese government regarding their social and cultural activities, including the use and spread of their "heritage languages."

The term "heritage language"（HL）is often used interchangeably with the term "home language"（HoL）to refer to a language that is not the dominant language in society but a language that belonged to one's ancestors and thus represents one's heritage. An HL may be regularly used by some, if not all, members of the family. If it is not one's native language, it is usually that of one's parents or grandparents. As one's HL may not be the only language used for communication within the family, or it may not even be used within the home context at all, it is thus inappropriate to equate it with the term "home language." HLs are often used in a limited set of contexts as the speaker's first or second language, depending on when and how they are acquired. HLs are usually "picked up" in one's childhood through naturalistic exposure by interacting with adult speakers or older siblings in the family. Adult immigrants and children who migrated after they began formal education in their native country are usually native speakers of their HLs. For their children and grandchildren, the HL is often acquired and used as a second language or dialect. In the sense of this paper, HL refers to the native language of an adult immigrant and is used in contrast with HoL, the language used for communication with other members of the family in the home domain.

4. This Study

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to answer the question: To what extent do the Chinese immigrant families who do not belong to the old Chinese communities such as those in Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki fit into the generalized stereotypes presented in previous research in terms of language practice and heritage language maintenance? Specifically, how do the Chinese immigrants define CHL? What attitudes do the new Chinese immigrant

parents, both *huaqiao* and *huaren*, hold today toward the use and maintenance of their native language? What languages are used for communication among family members in the home domain? What efforts, if any, are made to ensure that the immigrants' native language is transmitted to their next generation? And what challenges do they face in preserving their HL? It was hypothesized that parents' attitudes and identities play an important role in HL maintenance and that negative attitudes would accelerate language shift and lead to HL erosion.

This is a qualitative study that draws primarily from the ethnographic data, i.e., informal interviews and participant observations that the author gathered from 20 Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa, Japan. In each of the families who participated in this study, there was at least one parent who was a new Chinese immigrant.

Compared with the old Chinese communities in Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki, the old Chinese immigrants in Okinawa form a distinct and significant minority group in the local society in terms of their cultural and historical presence. They have a long history that goes back to the beginning of Ming Dynasty（1368-1644）. In 1393, the first settlers travelled to Okinawa from what is now the Fujian Province as scholar-bureaucrats. They served as government officials in China and diplomats in the Ryukyu Kingdom. On the other hand, because of the Japanese colonial history of Taiwan and the geographical proximity between Taiwan and Okinawa, a number of Taiwanese immigrants have settled more recently in Okinawa. Many of them arrived during the colonial period（1895-1945）as citizens of Japan and later became successful businessmen or professionals. During the 1960's and 70's, the U.S. military stationed in Okinawa hired many Chinese tailors directly from Taiwan and Hong Kong to serve their needs for uniforms and formal clothing. Akamine（2002）estimated that by the end of the last century, there were at least 4,000 *huaqiao* and *huaren* in Okinawa, including those who lived on the outlying islands. The data did not include descendants of the Chinese who arrived during the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom as they were said to be fully assimilated to Okinawan and Japanese cultures and often distinguished themselves from the new immigrants. Despite the long history of Chinese emigration to Okinawa and the economic strength of the Chinese residents, however, there is no Chinese ethnic school or China Town in the prefecture.

Official statistics show that Okinawa Prefecture recorded a total of 8,933 foreign residents in 2010（Ministry of Justice, 2011）. Of these, the Chinese population（i.e., PRC and ROC passports holders）totaled 2,011, competing with the Americans as the largest minority group. Over 75% of the Chinese residents were from Mainland China, representing 28 different provinces and municipalities, 22% were from Taiwan, and 2％ were from Hong Kong. These statistics include foreign residents with permanent residence or three-year residence status, as well as residents on a short-term visa such as foreign students, interns, employees and their dependants. As noted earlier, governmental data as such do not show the number of Chinese

Japanese, i.e., naturalized Japanese citizens who were formerly Chinese nationals, their Japanese-born children and grandchildren, and those who migrated from Taiwan as Japanese citizens during the colonial period. Of all the participants in this study, only four were officially-recognized foreign residents while the others were all naturalized Japanese citizens and thus did not fall into the "Chinese" category in governmental records.

4.2 Methodology

The participants in this study were five males and fifteen females, aged 33-64, with an average age of 49. They were all born and raised in Mainland China (Beijing, Jiangsu, Fujian, Shanghai, Liaoning), Taiwan or Hong Kong. Sixteen of them had Japanese nationality while four remained Chinese nationals (PRC, n=2; ROC, n=2). The participants arrived in Japan at the age of 14-30, with their length of residence in the country ranging from 13 to 45 years. The participants were all married and had children ranging from age 3 to 32. Data were collected from interviews and ethnographic observations. All the interviews were conducted by the author primarily in Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), Japanese, or a mixture of both languages, depending on the participants' preferences and the "flow" of interaction between the author and the participants. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted for 15 to 70 minutes. Participant observations were also made at the interviewees' homes, various functions and social gatherings of how the participants interacted with their children and other Chinese.

5. Chinese as a Heritage Language

Although the participants were all ethnic Chinese, they were originally from different provinces of Mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong and thus represented a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As shown in Table 1, the participants were native speakers of Mandarin, Shanghainese, Suzhou dialect, Fujianese, Minnanese, Cantonese, or Amis, one of the aboriginal languages in Taiwan.

Table 1. First language (L1) of parent immigrants

L1 (Dialect Group)	Number of Participants	%
Mandarin	6	30
Shanghainese (Wu)	2	10
Suzhou dialect (Wu)	1	5
Fujianese (Southern Min)	1	5
Minnanese (Southern Min)	6	30
Cantonese (Yue)	3	15
Amis	1	5
Total	20	100

Many of the participants spoke at least one Chinese dialect in addition to Mandarin. Depending on where they were born, raised and educated, their proficiency levels of Mandarin differed. The data suggested that the way the Chinese adult immigrants defined themselves and their HL also varied depending on their places of birth or origin, past experiences, and self-perceived identities. As shown in Table 2, the participants in this study had diverse opinions regarding what constitutes CHL. Although they all acknowledged the fact that Mandarin Chinese is the lingua franca for wider communication with other Chinese speakers, the only ones that did not hesitate to identify Mandarin as their HL were the native speakers of Mandarin. Dialect speakers tended to regard their home dialects as their HL, even though most of them spoke Mandarin as well. Exceptions were speakers of Shanghainese (n=1), the Suzhou dialect (1), Minannese (1), and Amis (1), all of whom considered Mandarin to be their HL.

Table 2. Definitions of CHL by speakers with different L1 backgrounds

L1	= *or* ≠	*CHL*
Mandarin	=	Mandarin
Shanghainese	=	Shanghainese
	≠	Mandarin
Suzhou dialect	≠	Mandarin
Fujianese	=	Fujianese
Minnanese	=	Minnanese
	≠	Mandarin
Cantonese	=	Cantonese
Ami	≠	Mandarin

Table 3 demonstrates that the understanding and practice of "native language (L1)," "heritage language (HL)" and "home language (HoL)" varied from one immigrant family to another and that even within the same family, they might not be identical. Mrs. L, for instance, spoke Minnanese as her L1, considered Mandarin to be her and her children's HL, but used mostly Japanese at home. Another example is Mrs. O, a native speaker of Amis, who viewed

Table 3. Some examples of native language, heritage language and home language

Participant	*Gender*	*Age*	*L1*	*HL*	*HoL*
K	M	64	Sh	Sh	Jp
G	F	52	Fu	Fu	Jp
H	F	48	Md	Md	Jp + Md
L	F	53	Mn	Md	Jp + Md
T	M	53	Ca	Ca	Jp + Ca
O	F	52	Am	Md	Jp

Note: Sh=Shanghainese; Jp= Japanese; Fu=Fujianese; Md=Mandarin (*Putonghua* or *Guoyu*); Mn=Minnanese; Ca=Cantonese; Am=Amis.

Mandarin as her and her children's HL but spoke only Japanese with her husband and their three children.

The following cases demonstrate how and why the notion of CHL is understood differently by different immigrants and what the stumbling blocks are to reaching a consensus among them:

Case #1 Mr. K, aged 64, HL= Shanghainese, HoL=Japanese

Born and raised in Shanghai, Mr. K spoke Shanghainese, Cantonese, and Mandarin. He arrived in Japan at the age of 19 to represent his father's tailoring business in Okinawa. Until then, he had spent 13 years in Shanghai and six years in Hong Kong. Mr. K became a naturalized Japanese citizen after he was married to his Okinawan wife. He adopted a Japanese name upon naturalization, using his wife's family name as his new family name and a Japanese-sounding name as his new given name. He claimed that he was still fluent in Shanghainese even though his use of the dialect was limited to only a few people living far away. Mr. K considered Shanghainese his HL for several reasons: (1) his parents were both from Shanghai, (2) he was born in Shanghai, (3) Shanghainese was his first language, and (4) he was far more fluent in Shanghainese than in Cantonese or Mandarin.

Case #2 Mrs. G, aged 52, HL=Fujianese, HoL=Japanese

Mrs. G was born in Fujian and had lived in Japan for over 30 years. She was fluent in Fujianese, Mandarin and Japanese. Mrs. G became a naturalized citizen of Japan over ten years ago. She regarded Fujianese as her HL because her family was originally from Fujian Province and Fujianese was her first language. Although Mrs. G used Mandarin with most of her Chinese-speaking friends in Okinawa, Fujianese was the language she used when talking with her parents, siblings, and other native Fujianese speakers. At home, she spoke only Japanese with her Japanese husband and their two children.

Case #3 Mrs. H, aged 48, HL=Beijing Mandarin, HoL=Mandarin & Japanese

A Beijing-born Mandarin speaker, Mrs. H arrived in Japan at the age of 22 as a dependent of her Chinese husband who was then a foreign student at a university in Japan. She and her husband had two children, aged 12 and 16, both born in Japan. As Mrs. H did not speak any variety of Chinese other than Mandarin, she was quick to identify Mandarin as her HL. When communicating with a Chinese dialect speaker who did not speak Mandarin, Mrs. H would communicate by writing if the dialect speaker had some understanding of written Chinese, or she would use Japanese if it was their common language.

Case #4 Mrs. L, aged 53, HL=Taiwan Mandarin, HoL=Minnanese & Japanese

At the age of 16, Mrs. L migrated from Taiwan to Okinawa with her whole family. When she was in Taiwan, Mrs. L spoke Minnanese at home and Mandarin at school. She finished her high school education in a public school in Okinawa. Mrs. L and her family became naturalized Japanese citizens more than twenty years ago. Her husband was also from Taiwan and they had two children, both born and raised in Okinawa. Mrs. L spoke mostly Minnanese with her mother, siblings, husband and her Minnanese-speaking friends and relatives. With other Chinese speakers who did not speak Minnanese, she used Mandarin. Mrs. L considered Taiwan Mandarin to be her HL because it was the language she learned at school and used to communicate with non-Minnanese-speaking Chinese people.

Case #5 Mr. T, aged 53, HL=Cantonese, HoL=Cantonese & Japanese

Born and educated in Hong Kong, Mr. T was a native Cantonese speaker. His father was originally from Shanghai and his mother was from Guangdong Province. Before moving to Hong Kong in mid 1940s, Mr. T's father had never been exposed to Cantonese. Since Hong Kong was dominantly Cantonese-speaking, Mr. T's father, like many other non-Cantonese immigrants from Mainland China, knew he had to learn Cantonese to survive there. Even though Mr. T's father was a native speaker of Shanghainese, he spoke it only with his Shanghainese-speaking friends and relatives. At home, he used only Cantonese with his wife and children. Mr. T's mother was a Cantonese monolingual speaker and all the relatives on her side spoke only Cantonese. Although Mr. T had a few Shanghainese relatives in Hong Kong, they all spoke some Cantonese so there was practically no need for Mr. T to learn Shanghainese. After arriving in Japan as a foreign student at the age of 22, Mr. T started receiving formal Japanese instruction and "picking up" Mandarin from his Mandarin-speaking friends who came from Mainland China and Taiwan. Mr. T's wife was also from Hong Kong and they had three children, all born and raised in Japan. Unlike most of the naturalized Japanese citizens, Mr. T retained his Chinese name. He spoke both Cantonese and Japanese at home. As Cantonese was his native language, he considered it to be his HL.

To sum up, contrary to popular belief that one's heritage is ethnically, culturally, and linguistically defined, the participants in this study expressed divergent opinions on the issue. Their understanding of the concept of HL, or mother tongue, is influenced not only by their linguistic and cultural backgrounds but more importantly, by their self-perceived identities and past experiences. In addition, while one's HL is usually considered to be equivalent to one's native language, some immigrants extended the notion of HL to refer to their native dialect, or the language they were taught at school. In other words, the term "Chinese as a heritage

language," as it is understood by immigrants, does not mean just one language, notably, Mandarin-based standard spoken and written Chinese. Rather, it encompasses all varieties of the Chinese language, regardless of the size of their speaking populations, mutual intelligibility, and whether they have a written form or not.

6. Language Choice in the Home Domain

Language choice is common in encounters in which people who speak more than one language are faced with the challenge of choosing an appropriate language for communication with their interlocutors. Their choice may vary according to their relationship with the interlocutors, domains of interaction, topics of conversation, communicative purposes, and other contextual factors. Sometimes language choice can be crucial because of its social, political, economic, and psychological impact on the speakers and interlocutors. Even in the family, language choice plays an important role particularly in interactions between husbands and wives who come from different linguistic backgrounds and between parents and children whose first languages differ.

This study showed that most of the Chinese immigrant parents were not keen to maintain use of their native language within the family and extend time and effort in their children's HL learning. The data suggested that although the languages used within the home domain differed from one family to another, language choice was to a large extent determined by the ethnicity of the participant's spouse and the abilities and preferences of their children. As shown in Table 4, Japanese was the dominant home language in all families, regardless of the parents' L1s and their notions of CHL.

Table 4. Diversity of home languages

L1	*HL*	*P-P*	*P-C*	*C-C*
Md	Md	Md+Jp	Jp	Jp
Sh	Sh Md	Jp Md+Jp	Jp Jp	Jp
Sz	Md	Md+Jp	Md+Jp	-
Fu	Fu	Jp	Jp	Jp
Mn	Mn Md	Mn+Jp Md+Jp	Jp	Jp
Ca	Ca Jp	Ca+Jp Jp	Ca+Jp Jp	Jp
Am	Md	Jp	Jp	Jp

Note: P-P=between mother and father; P-C=between parent and child; C-C=between siblings; Sz=Suzhou dialect.

In addition, different languages were used with different members within the same family. Participants with a Chinese spouse tended to use Chinese (i.e., Mandarin, Minnanese or Cantonese) and Japanese to communicate with each other, whereas those with a Japanese spouse used Japanese only. In parent-child interactions, Japanese was preferred. When Chinese was used, it was either Mandarin or Cantonese. The children used only Japanese among themselves.

Tables 5 and 6 show that the language used between husbands and wives was not necessarily the same as that used between parents and children. Nearly half of the Chinese parents used only Japanese with their spouses (45%). Of the 20 parents, nine (6F, 3M) were married to Japanese and all of them had adopted their spouses' family names. They coincided with the ones that used only Japanese at home and were the least enthusiastic about transmitting CHL to their children. Surprisingly, none of these parents used only Chinese with their spouses. Even those with Chinese spouses tended to communicate with their husband or wife in a mixed code with Chinese (i.e., Mandarin, Cantonese or Minnanese) being the primary preference and Japanese the secondary.

Table 5. Language choice between parents

Language (s)	*N*	%
Japanese only	9	45
Mainly Japanese; some Mandarin	1	5
Mainly Mandarin; some Japanese	7	35
Mainly Cantonese; some Japanese	1	5
Mainly Minnanese; some Japanese	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 6 indicates that Japanese was the major language for communication between parents and children in all families. Only 40% of the parents used some Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) with their children, whereas 60% used Japanese only. Nearly one-third of the parents used mainly Japanese with some Mandarin. Only one parent used mainly Cantonese and some Japanese.

Table 6. Language choice between parents and children

Language (s)	*N*	%
Japanese only	12	60
Mainly Japanese; some Mandarin	7	35
Mainly Cantonese; some Japanese	1	5
Total	20	100

According to Fishman (1991), intergenerational linguistic continuity can be achieved only if the language is fostered in as many domains of one's individual and social life as

acceptable and feasible. The home domain, as he argues, is one of the most important domains where efforts to stabilize and restore a minority language should be concentrated. Unfortunately, the heritage language was not widely used as a home language in most of the Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa. The on-going language shift in communication between parents and children indicates that intergenerational linguistic continuity was broken.

7. Attitudes toward Chinese Language Learning

During the interviews, two contrastive attitudes were exhibited toward the learning of Chinese as an HL: one perceives it as a problem or burden whereas the other a resource.

Chinese as a problem or burden

Mr. K, among others, regarded Chinese language learning as a problem or burden. Although he was a multilingual speaker himself, he saw no need for his children, aged 17 (M) and 21 (F), to acquire Shanghainese, Cantonese, or Mandarin on several grounds: 1) The children's mother was Japanese. 2) The children were born Japanese. 3) They were raised and educated in Japan. 4) They had lived in Okinawa all their lives and were not likely to relocate to any Chinese-speaking country in the future. 5) English is more useful and important than Chinese. Mr. K would rather hope that his children spend more time and energy on studying English and become fluent in it because he believed English, as a global language, would benefit his children more than any variety of Chinese. To borrow his words, it would be "a waste of time and money for them to study Chinese."

A similar view was held by several other participants such as Mrs. N, who was born and raised in Beijing. Mrs. N first came to Japan as a foreign student at the age of 22. Two years later, she married her Okinawan husband. At the time of the interview, she had her own business as a beautician and also helped with her husband's family business. Mrs. N was a mother of three children, aged 3, 7, and 13. She adopted a Japanese name upon naturalization and spoke only Japanese with her children. Although she had Chinese friends and always spoke Mandarin with them, the language was never used at home. When she was asked why she never taught or spoke Mandarin to her children, she had only one reason, "My children are Japanese, not Chinese."

Some Chinese parents did not encourage their children to learn Chinese for other reasons. Mrs. A, for instance, recalled studying Japanese very hard when she first came to Japan as a teenager, and she often felt ashamed of her Chinese accent. At home, she and her Chinese husband spoke Mandarin with each other but with their two children, they always spoke Japanese. She explained why she and her husband had never encouraged their children to study Mandarin or use it at home:

> "We, especially me, were worried that if we made our children speak Mandarin at home or forced them to learn the language when they were little, they would develop a Chinese accent in their Japanese and it would do them no good at school or in the future. If they spoke Japanese with a Chinese accent, they would definitely be bullied by other kids at school. I know that because I have been there myself. I just didn't want my children to go through the same experiences as I did—as a victim of bullying and discrimination."

According to Mrs. A, her personal experiences and worries were shared by many of her Chinese friends and relatives who lived in Okinawa and other parts of Japan. Such concerns were obviously caused by historical factors and aggravated by the sociocultural and political climates.

Chinese as a resource

On the other hand, some participants were quite enthusiastic about introducing their children to Chinese language learning, although they perceived the Chinese language more as a resource for their children's future gains and economic advancement than an important part of their ethnic and cultural heritage. Mandarin was used as a tool not only to communicate with other Chinese speakers but also to understand Chinese culture, be it from an "outsider's" perspective. Mrs. C, an immigrant from Mainland China, told the author,

> "The Chinese language is very useful. One must learn the language in order to explore the width and depth of Chinese culture and benefit from it. I personally never thought seriously about heritage language maintenance per se, probably because my husband is Mongolian, not a Han Chinese. But we both speak Mandarin as our first language, and it's the common language among the Chinese people."

Another participant, Mrs. Y from Taiwan, showed great regret for the fact that she and her Japanese husband lacked the ability to envision the potential value of the Chinese language in their children's future and missed the opportunity to invest in their children's Chinese language learning at an early age. By the time the couple realized the potential of Chinese for their children's future career and the construction of their self-identities, it was already too late as their children had grown up and lost the motivation to start a new home language. To make amends for the "mistake" they made with their children, they decided to send their

youngest child to study abroad in Taiwan and to invest in their grandchildren's foreign language education by sending them to an American school from preschool and enrolling them in a Saturday Chinese language program offered by one of the *kakyousoukai* in Okinawa.

8. Identity Reconstruction and Language Shift

As a fundamental means for the expression of identities, an individual's language represents her roots and sense of belonging, how she perceives herself, and how she wants to be perceived by others. Although an individual's linguistic identity is generally inherited from her parents and grandparents, it may be reconstructed by the individual later in her life. In order to survive and succeed in the settled country, many immigrants strive to accommodate themselves to the local community by acquiring the local language and taking up a new linguistic identity. This study found evidence from several participants who reconstructed their identities by disassociating themselves from their ethnic and linguistic heritage.

Case #1 Mr. R

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Mr. R spoke the most languages and was the most "cosmopolitan" among all the participants in the study. He insisted on using Japanese or English throughout the interview to avoid what he called "the trouble of translating back and forth." Mr. R was born and raised in Hong Kong and came to Japan（Okinawa）for the first time at the age 20 as a foreign student. When he arrived in the country, he had little knowledge of the Japanese language. He was married to an Okinawan and they had three children and two grandchildren. Mr. R obtained his Japanese nationality by naturalization after he was married to his wife. He had taken his wife's family name but kept his Chinese given name using a Japanized pronunciation. Mr. R considered himself to be Japanese rather than Chinese.

Mr. R's father and grandmother were originally from Shanghai and his mother was a Hong Kong Cantonese. His grandmother spoke only Shanghainese but his father used a mixture of Cantonese, English and Shanghainese with everybody else in his family. With his monolingual Cantonese-speaking mother, Mr. R always spoke Cantonese. Mr. R was able to understand his grandmother's Shanghainese but did not speak the language very well himself. When communicating with his siblings and their children, he used both English and Cantonese. Judging from the information provided by Mr. R, there is no doubt that Cantonese was his first language. In fact, he was apparently still quite fluent in it at the time of the interview and there was no trait of language attrition in his Cantonese self-introduction. Surprisingly, however, it was Japanese and English that he claimed to be his native languages. He gave the following reasons: 1）Cantonese had no place in his life in Japan as he

spoke only Japanese with his Okinawan wife and their Japanese-speaking children and grandchildren. 2) He had been using mostly Japanese and English at work over the past 40 years or so. 3) He received English education in Hong Kong and started using English as a child. 4) Cantonese was his mother's native language, not his, because she was the only monolingual Cantonese speaker in his family.

Case #2 Mrs. O

An aboriginal woman from Taiwan, Mrs. O belonged to the Amis group, the largest of the fourteen indigenous groups in Taiwan. Her father was Amis and her mother was of mixed Amis and Chinese ancestry. Mrs. O arrived in Japan at the age of 30. Although she and her Okinawan husband had been married for over 20 years and they had three children, Mrs. O never wanted to change her nationality. She remained a national of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and lived in Japan as a permanent resident. Mrs. O adopted a Japanese name using her husband's family name and a new given name. In everyday life, she went by her Japanese name but was better known by her Chinese name among her Chinese friends. Mrs. O grew up in a multilingual environment speaking a mixture of Amis, Japanese and Mandarin at home, Minnanese with her neighbors, and Mandarin at school. Since her parents received Japanese education during the Japanese colonial period, they were more fluent in Japanese than in Amis, their ethnic language, and they spoke little Mandarin. Regardless of her Amis ethnicity, Mrs. O perceived herself as more "Taiwanese" than "Amis" in many ways. She held an ROC passport and identified herself as a Chinese national. Mrs. O was an active member of one of the two major *kakyousoukai* (Chinese associations) in Okinawa and interacted frequently with other Taiwanese wives who were married to Okinawans. She considered Mandarin rather than Amis or Minnanese to be her HL because Mandarin was the language she learned as a child and among all the languages she spoke, she was most fluent in it.

Case #3 Mrs. S

Another example is Mrs. S, a Minnanese native speaker from Taiwan. Mrs. S migrated to Okinawa 24 years ago with her Taiwanese husband and their daughter. A few years later, she and her family were naturalized, and they all changed their Chinese names to Japanese ones. Mrs. S was a homemaker but worked as a part-time dance instructor. When interacting with other Taiwanese wives, Mrs. S switched back and forth between Minnanese and Japanese. When interacting with Chinese speakers of other dialects, she spoke Mandarin or Japanese. At home, she and her husband spoke Minananese and Japanese, but they used Japanese only when communicating with their daughter. At the beginning of the interview, Mrs. S was reluctant to provide any information with regard to her Chinese background, including

her Chinese name. Her reason was that she was now Japanese and her Chinese name no longer represented her—she was known only by her Japanese name to her friends, acquaintances, and students in Okinawa. She told the author that she would not mind speaking Mandarin or Minnanese with other Chinese speakers even though she thought it was probably better to use Japanese if they could understand and speak it too. Mrs. S also thought it was natural for her daughter to forget her Minnanese and Mandarin as it was Japanese her daughter heard all the time after they migrated to Okinawa and it was the only language she needed to survive in the country. She admitted that adopting Japanese names and acquiring the Japanese language had saved her and her family a lot of trouble fitting into Japanese society. In addition, Mrs. S did not think it was important for her daughter or grandchildren to learn to speak Minnanese or Mandarin as they were all Japanese.

The experiences of Mr. R, Mrs. O and Mrs. S illustrate that one's linguistic identity may change according to one's national and cultural re-identification. In other words, as one's national and cultural identities can be reconstructed, so can one's linguistic identity. Unlike Mr. R and Mrs. S, Mrs. O's linguistic identity did not seem to be influenced by her Japanese spouse or her socioeconomic needs in the host country. Being a minority group member in Taiwan, she understood the importance of identifying with members of the dominant group by speaking their language. After living in Japan for more than two decades, she had picked up the Japanese language but had no intention yet to become a naturalized citizen of the country. Her reason was that she had dissociated herself once from the Amis tribe to construct a Chinese (Taiwanese) identity and she was not ready to give it up for yet another new identity.

It is clear that an individual's notion of what constitutes his HL is not necessarily predetermined by his first language or place of origin. Rather, it can be affected by his self-perceived identity and personal experiences. His reconstructed linguistic identity determines his attitude toward HL use and maintenance, which in turn affects his children's and grandchildren's HL learning. Negative attitudes towards one's cultural and linguistic heritage accelerate language shift from the minority language to the dominant language or even lead to complete loss of the former. The findings also suggested that a language shift from Chinese to Japanese is in progress among the new Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa. In this regard, the "ethnolinguistic identity theory" provides a useful framework for understanding the phenomenon.

Developed by Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987), the ethnolinguistic identity theory explains why some speakers emphasize their ethnolinguistic characteristics in intergroup interactions, while others de-emphasize them and converge toward members of out-groups. The

theory views language as an emblem of group membership and social identity. The authors hypothesized that when ethnic group identity becomes important for individuals, the individuals may try to make themselves favorably distinct from out-group members by accentuating their speech styles or switching to their in-group language. On the contrary, if individuals fear that use of their native language will give rise to a negative social identity and cause them trouble, they may strive to assimilate and identify with speakers of the dominant language. If a large number of members of a minority group assimilate to the language of the dominant group in order to achieve a more positive identity in the settlement society, it may result in subtractive bilingualism or even language loss.

One of the determining factors that affect an individual's sense of ethnic belonging is "ethnolinguistic vitality" (Giles et al., 1977), which is dependent on status (e.g., economic, political, and linguistic prestige), demographic strength (e.g., absolute numbers, concentration, birthrates, migration), and institutional support and control factors (i.e., representation of one's own language in media, government services, education, politics). Considering the status of the ethnic Chinese in Japan, their population size, demographic distribution, and lack of political strength, linguistic prestige and institutional support, the current ethnolinguistic vitiality of Chinese is estimated to be rather low. Under these circumstances, it is understandable that most of the parents in this study did not express much concern about their children's HL learning. In a sense, the intergenerational language shift from Chinese to Japanese among the new immigrants may be regarded as the necessary outcome of a conscious attempt to acculturate and establish a more positive social identity in the Japanese society.

9. Challenges for CHL Maintenance

As demonstrated above, CHL maintenance in Okinawa is faced with a number of challenges:

To begin with, CHL among the Chinese is a complex notion that involves not a single standardized form of the Chinese language but mutually unintelligible varieties, each of which is tied strongly to the speaker's ethnic and cultural identification. It should be noted that not all Chinese dialects are treated as low varieties in the communities where they are spoken. Compared with the Suzhou dialect, Shanghainese, for example, is perceived to have more prestige in the Wu dialect group. Like Shanghainese, Hakka, Fujianese and other non-Mandarin varieties of Chinese are used mainly for oral communication as they do not have a standardized written form. Cantonese is, however, to some extent an exception due to its status as the dominant language in Hong Kong and Macau, and the laissez-faire language policies of the British and Portuguese colonial governments before reversion to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively. In recent years, there has been an abundant use of the written form of Cantonese

in Hong Kong's local media and literature. As a result, written Cantonese has been developing rapidly and gaining popularity among its users in printed media and e-communication. Nevertheless, when it comes to reading and writing Chinese, one has to learn standard written Chinese, which is largely based on Mandarin. Even though most of the dialect-speaking immigrants in this study considered their own dialects to be their HL, they shared the view that one must study standard Chinese for written communication with other Chinese speakers. It is noteworthy, however, that for many of those who define their heritage in terms of their home dialects, Mandarin Chinese is learned as a foreign language rather than a heritage language.

Next, Chinese immigrant parents do not always play a positive role in their children's CHL learning. Instead, they may sometimes impede learning and lead to failure of CHL maintenance. A vast majority of the parents in this study expressed a lack of interest in using the HL or increasing its use at home. Their attitudes were deeply influenced by their past experiences and self-perceived identities as well as socio-political variables. The fact that they were not keen to maintain use of their native language in the home domain and extend time and effort in their children's CHL learning can be viewed as a way to dissociate themselves from members of the in-group or a strategy against the anti-Chinese sentiments in the settlement society.

Even in cases where positive attitudes and actions were observed, success in CHL maintenance was rare in the next generation, mainly because the social context was not conducive to CHL learning. In Clément's（1980）model of second language learning and Lambert's（1974）discussion of bilingualism, social context is a core element in the development and acquisition of second language competence. Socio-cultural milieu affects one's motivation and attitudes in the learning of an HL, often more so than in the learning of a foreign language. This is mainly due to the inherent affiliation of an HL with one's ethnic and cultural origin. Regardless of a positive attitude toward maintenance of CHL, the task will not be easy in a place like Okinawa. There are several reasons for that: First, just like anywhere else in Japan, the Chinese community in Okinawa is linguistically diverse. There are many varieties of Chinese being spoken by the immigrants in Okinawa and many of them are not mutually comprehensible. Second, neither the local nor central government shows an interest in promoting multilingualism or preserving the languages and cultures of minority groups. As shown in Genesee, Rogers, and Holobow（1983）, perceived motivational support from the other-language community is an important determinant of L2 achievement. While it is true that there have been no governmental measures against the use and learning of Chinese and practice of Chinese customs, there has been no support of any kind to promote the language and culture of the Chinese residents in the country either. Third, there is little support from the Chinese community for the learning of CHL or further development of it. Given these conditions, CHL maintenance in Japan continues to be a personal matter. Whether or not one succeeds in

maintaining one's HL depends mainly on continuous efforts and perseverance of individual learners and long-term support from their families. This study suggests that those families who can afford to send their children back to their native countries for regular visits and HL learning have a better chance of success in maintaining their HLs. Without the benefits of such opportunities, language erosion is inevitable.

Finally, as has been pointed out by various critics, Japan is one of the typical monolinguistically-dominated nations with a prevailing attitude that any resident in the country must learn to speak Japanese and that any other language is unnecessary. The government's assimilationist language approach is manifest in its national-language policy and lack of support for the preservation of the languages of the Ainu, Okinawans, Koreans, and immigrants from other countries. Clankie（2000）attributed this to the government's failure to recognize the linguistic diversity of the country and its misconception of multilingualism as a threat. He argued that Japan can become an internationally competitive nation and contribute to global development and world peace only if it acknowledges the fact that it is indeed a multi-racial and multicultural society and learns how to make use of the resources of its immigrants and their families. It is a pity that while all the Chinese adult immigrants in this study showed a high level of proficiency in both Japanese and their native language, and some even had a good command in other languages and dialects as well, most of their children were Japanese-speaking monolinguals. As a result, interaction between the parents and their children was mostly in Japanese.

10. Conclusion

To recapitulate, this study has shown that contrary to the general belief that one's heritage is ethnically, culturally, and linguistically defined, the Chinese immigrants expressed divergent opinions on the issue. Their understanding of CHL was influenced not only by their linguistic and cultural backgrounds but also by their personal experiences and self-perceived identities. While an immigrant's HL is usually considered to be equivalent to his or her language of origin, the participants in this study extended the notion of HL to include their home dialects, the national（or standard）language of their home country, or the language they were formally taught at school. Researchers and scholars should be careful not to oversimplify the term "Chinese as a heritage language" as meaning just one language, notably, Mandarin-based standard spoken and written Chinese. Rather, it is an umbrella term that encompasses all dialects and sub-dialects within the Chinese language family, regardless of the size of their speaking populations, mutual intelligibility, and whether they have a written form or not.

Furthermore, although all the parent immigrants in this study were fluent in two languages or more, their children were mostly Japanese-speaking monolinguals. In a study of the

old Chinese community in Kobe, Guo（1999）reported a language shift from Chinese dialects to Japanese. The findings of this study suggest a language shift in a similar direction among the new Chinese immigrant families in Okinawa. The major difference between the two is that while it took the old immigrants in Kobe five generations for language shift to complete its course, it took the new immigrants in Okinawa only two generations. The future of CHL maintenance looks grim in the current socio-political milieu in Japan. Unless the ethnolinguistic vitality of Chinese increases, the shift is probably irrevocable.

The size of the sample was small and reflected limitations in terms of age, gender, and place of origin. It is unclear to what extent we can generalize these results, but as a case study based on a small sample, it suffices to say that the participants represent the diversity of the Chinese residents in Japan. Compared with the old Chinese communities in Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka and Nagasaki, the Chinese population in Okinawa may be smaller in size and less concentrated, but the macrostructures－social, cultural, and political－of Okinawa are closer to those that exist in other parts of Japan where there is no China Town or Chinese ethnic school. In addition to making a contribution to the clarification of the language issues of the Chinese immigrants in Japan, this study provides an insight into the pivotal role parents play in the HL maintenance and loss.

One more noteworthy point is that to lay people, "heritage language" is an unfamiliar and yet heavily loaded term. When I tried to translate the term into Chinese for the interviewees, I found no equivalent in the language and thus I ended up borrowing the Japanese translation *keishougo*（継承語）and pronouncing it in Mandarin or Cantonese. I left it to the individual participants to interpret the term the way they wanted. It was found that while most of the participants equated it with their first language（or mother tongue）and/or that of their parents and grandparents, some understood it as meaning the "standard" language they were taught at school in their home country. HL is a loaded term in the sense that it entails 1）a moral responsibility on the part of the speakers to respect it, cherish it, and pass it on to the next generation, 2）an obligation on the part of the learners to acquire it as an expression of their roots and heritage, and 3）a means to（re-）construct their ethnic and cultural identities.

Notes

1．In addition to *Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkou*（神戸中華同文学校）, there are four other Chinese schools in Japan. They are *Yokohama Yamate Chuuka Gakkou*（横浜山手中華学校）, *Tokyo Chuuka Gakkou*（東京中華学校）, *Yokohama Chuuka Gakuin*（横浜中華学院）, and *Osaka Chuuka Gakkou*（大阪中華学校）. The first two are affiliated with the PRC Government（Mainland China）, whereas the other three are affiliated with the ROC Government（Taiwan）.

2. Although Yue (e.g. Cantonese), Min (e.g. Fujianese), Wu (e.g. Shanghainese) and Mandarin are different dialect groups of the Chinese language belonging to the same Sino-Tibetan language family, they differ significantly from one another in phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics.
3. For other classification systems of overseas Chinese, see Yamaguchi (1983, p.282).
4. Following the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Republic of China (ROC) in 1949, both Mainland China and Taiwan competed for the loyalty of overseas Chinese by sponsoring Chinese language programs and cultural activities, causing a rift within the Chinese community in Japan. In the 1950s, the Chinese Associations, *kakyousoukai*, split along the ROC and PRC lines. From 1970s to 1980s, the ROC-affiliated associations further split into two groups: one that continued to pursue the ultimate goal of unification with Mainland China and one that advocated the independence of Taiwan. Starting from 1990s, new Chinese associations began to appear. They were mostly established by those who arrived as foreign students from Mainland China in the 1980s. The new associations are given different names such as *Shinkakyoukajinkai* (新華僑華人会), *Shinkakyoukajinrengoukai* (新華僑華人連合会) or *Shinkakyoukajinkyoukai* (新華僑華人協会), all prefixed by the character 新 (*shin*, 'new') so as to distinguish themselves from the old Chinese associations.

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